2: Tessmann--104 E-5 (1904-1909) 1913 FH9 Fang FH9

1. Sexual Life before Maturity

961 Like Europeans, the Pangwe divide the individual's life into
156 three sections, the period of childhood, that of adulthood, and that of old age. The last period, however, concerns the Negro much less than the first two periods of life, because on the average death occurs at an early age. Sexual maturity represents the boundary line between childhood and adulthood, and the Pangwe emphasizes it very much because sexuality is at the center of his religious conceptions and /252/ finds external expression through the initiation into the cults. This initiation corresponds to our confirmation. The Pangwe acts as though a person before sexual maturity -- for the sake of brevity I shall call this person a child (mə́ŋgo III) -- represents a stage antecedent to actual manhood, mot III, just as, say, the caterpillar is the stage prior to the butterfly.

779 If we think back on what was said concerning the soul in the
● 936 discussion of religion /Ed., not translated/, we remember that
964 the Pangwe distinguish two kinds of people according to the kind
982 of soul they possess: bebə́n (uninitiated, good), and bongə́s (initiated, evil). Children (bə́ŋgo) are bebə́n, uninitiated, good, because they do not know sexual intercourse and, if they have become acquainted with it prematurely, do not know that they are committing a sin; indeed, they could not know since, after all, they are not initiated into the profound connections between sexual intercourse, life, and death.

187 In reality the situation is such that the Pangwe young people
24 are perfectly well informed, but officially each one must emphasize that he is a child, mə́ŋgo, that is, good, unknowing, uninitiated as to sexual intercourse, even when he has long outgrown not only the actually innocent childhood (in the narrower sense), but also the period of sexual maturity. This point can be tested on any Negro between the age of ten and 20 years by asking him whether he already practices sexual intercourse. The answer will always be the same, be he a Fang from the bush or a Jaunde long since glossed over by a bit of civilization: "ma ne mə́ŋgo (I am
[672] a child, that is, innocent, I know nothing about sexual intercourse)."

882
864 By this answer, he secures for himself the mild judgment with
[672] which we dispose of "silly boys' pranks."

For children, bə̄ngo, therefore, quite a different yardstick is applied; what they do, especially in respect to sexual matters, is not taken seriously.

834 bə̄ngo bă bə̄lĕ oson = children have no sense of shame, and
155 the other way around, adults do not display much towards chil-
864 dren (see homosexual life, Vol. II, page 131), since, after all, children simply do not know what evil (sŏ) is or what shame (o-so-n) means. If the otherwise, at least externally, very modest Negroes say this themselves, we should not hope to find many of the characteristics of a true, innocent ebi'n among the children. As a matter of fact their first playful imitations of
● 836 sexual intercourse as they observe older people performing it
838 begin at five or six years of age; between the age of eight and nine "playing parents" is nothing but perfectly conscious sexual intercourse, though it is generally regarded as a game and was cited to me in the category of "children's games" under the name ebŏbă'ne-bə̄ngo (Ntum) or ebă'nebă'ne bə̄ngo (Fang). It is usually done in the forenoon /253/ in the dwellings when the parents are in the fields or absent elsewhere. The partners are not only boys and girls, but also boys among each other. Later, at the age of eight to 10 years and frequently somewhat beyond, many boys manifest a similar inclination towards members of their own sex, along with a sexual urge for girls of the same age. In view of the emphasis on maintaining, as long as possible, the outward appearance of modesty, the Pangwe boys make use of a device whereby they come to an understanding "metaphorically." A boy
201] rakes some earth and sweepings onto a leaf, ties this hastily together like a food bundle, and gives it to the other. If the latter is ready to respond to the proffered affection, he will open the bundle and pretend to eat of it, saying finally, "ma mane a dzi," that is, "I have eaten." If he is not inclined to respond, he will throw away the bundle, of whose contents he has full knowledge.

Concerning masturbation, see below, page 130.

2. Sexual Life between Maturity and Marriage

836 After reaching maturity, the girl is called ngɔ̄n III, and the
[984] young man nkɔ̌ɔ́ I; for both there is also the term bandu̍man,
plural of ndu̍man = young man or girl at the age of being in love.
Thus the name itself shows under what sign the subsequent period
of life is lived. Free love in the boldest sense of the word pre-
vails. The girl may give away her favors without inhibition to
whom and whenever she desires to do so, and she need only ob-
[833] serve the religious rule that prohibits sexual intercourse during the
[885] day and the social rule that prohibits intercourse between blood
relatives. Otherwise there is no barrier; members of the same
age group come together and make thorough use of their freedom.
In the initial period after maturity, to be sure, sexual desire is
dampened by the moral admonitions of the cults with their
proclamation of the sinfulness of sexual intercourse. This sinful-
ness, combined with physical satiety and psychic revulsion, pro-
duces a "moral hangover"; however, such considerations and
feelings are soon overcome. As in eating, so in their love life,
the Pangwe know no moderation. They empty the cup of joy to
the lees. Later on, especially when the Pangwe has acquired
several wives, he tends to develop a more business-like attitude
towards sexual love, in place of the youthful amours which alter-
nate unsteadily between ungoverned passion and its aftereffects,
psychic unease.

In view of this extensive free love, it goes without saying
[585] that the virginity of his future wife plays no role in the man's
choice. Indeed, the presence of a hymen (ajādebă) is usually
scarcely noticed and /254/ to some is totally unknown. Around
the age of 15 years it is supposed to be destroyed by boys of the
same age.

833 As for their libidinal drive, the girls are generally not in-
936 ferior to the boys. However, we may say that for the girls potency
[572] alone is as a rule the deciding factor in the choice of a friend.
This fact is well expressed in the various dance songs at the Mbale
[181] (which, incidentally, were brought to the Fang and Ntum by the
sexually loose Jaunde) as, for example, in the following complaint.

Leader of the chorus:

539 Mī'nĭnga ya mot ebə̄'n, edə̌ a va
133 (A) woman and (a) man love affair (1), thereupon he had
836

1. ebə̄'n, "public region," hence, by extension, "love affair, relationship."

kĕ, a kĕ a bŭmo ba mī'nĭnga
gone (to her), he goes to sleep with (the) woman (on)

enə̌'n, a sā a nie kaa ngū edə̌
bed, he cohabits with her, no virility, thereupon (a)

mə́t a va ke, a nga jiē'
man (that is, another) he had gone, he lived to sing (the)

dzə̌́: mī'nĭnga niĕne: o kīnī
song (2): (The) woman she (speaks) thus (to me): you go

2. Poetic license, because the manner of recital is song; ordinarily it would be: Thereupon a man said the following.

a kāda nā: kaa bĕdĕ a sŏ', kaa
to say this (to the lover): Not again (to) come, not

bede a sū, a să dzə̌́ mebŭ'n, alū'
again (to) come, one not complete sex act, night

a ngĕn ojă'b --ma nga tame
it was still long (lasting) (3) -- I live must (to)

3. That is, the lover would have had enough time to cohabit several times.

539 tǭbǒ̄ nale, adzǭ a n'abě̄
833 remain thus, affair it is bad.

836 Chorus:

A ta ma vū or a na ma
Oh, my father, I am dying, Oh, my mother, I

vū.
am dying (4).

[195] 4. The Negro dies on every occasion when something unpleasant happens to him; the chorus thus speaks from the point of view of the woman who is in such despair concerning this "bad affair" that she would almost like to die.

836 Although there are no actual prostitutes, a number of the
548 women enjoy the free life of a girl and up to the age of 30 or 35 years remain ngǭ'n, "girls." This kind of "girl," to whom every man, boy or adult, whatever his name, whether he is handsome or not, is equally /255/ welcome, is called a ñžīla. The fact that people have no better opinion of her than we have of a loose woman is shown by a song sung at a festival for the
[533] souls. In its own way this song represents a delightful satire and, for the Pangwe, an extraordinarily witty, poetic achievement. I have reproduced it in Section 20 ("Music") /Ed., not translated/.

831 In spite of the great sensuality, relations between the sexes do have finer traits; tactful behavior, precise observation of prescribed forms, and profound spiritual sensibility are not absent. The ingenuous conduct of the young man toward the girl's parents and the naturalness with which the young people enjoy their love, without obligations, without social prejudices, have something almost ideal about them.

584 If the young man has noticed a girl or has already come to an understanding with her, he goes to her parents, introduces himself first to the father, who usually shows his most amiable side and recommends the young man to his daughter. Even though the lover did not obtain the girl's agreement beforehand -- something which can be accomplished with a few words in a brief encounter -- he will nonetheless find little opposition. The relations with the "father-in-law" and above all with the "mother-in-law" are as cordial and tender as can be. The young man brings his "mother-in-law" a little present, European salt or other things that women [431] love, and he also endears himself to the father through little attentions or presents, while the parents or the girl herself entertain the guest to the best of their ability. A natural tact causes the Pangwe to avoid mentioning anything that touches upon his relations to the girl in his contact with her family. Indeed, his delicacy with respect to the "parents-in-law" grows into a false sense of shame:

wō'-oson a vū mabā'de
[539] (The) feeling -- shame, it dies (from) frambesia

menkī,ē'.
(of the) parents-in-law (relatives by marriage).

The sense of shame has caused a person to die from frambesia transmitted by the parents-in-law, that is, a suitor was afraid, from a sense of shame, to turn down the food offered him by the girl's father who was suffering from frambesia. He ate with the man from one bowl, caught the disease, and died.

584/836 To the girl herself the lover usually brings half a piece of material -- valued at one mark -- (among the Jaunde he brings a whole piece). In his courtship, the lover does not usually arrive at the desired goal right away, for it is customary for the girl, even if she grants the young man her affection and /256/ sleeps in the same bed with him, to refuse sexual intercourse with him during the first night. (See the tale on p. 132).

The reason for this custom lies in oson, the feeling of shame toward the talk of other people. The two parties know each other perfectly well as regards their lechery, but they pretend to be quite

584 innocent and anxiously avoid anything that might give rise to
836 gossip. Thus, if we speak with the Pangwe about sexual matters, we constantly hear the word oson, "shame," oson this and oson that. Admittedly, wherever European influence is spreading, the
[177] use of oson decreases, for together with this influence the religious conceptions upon which shame is based are disappearing (as we saw in the case of sin, nsŏm); at the same time, moral sensibilities are becoming laxer, and there are no longer any self-imposed restraints.

With free love universally prevalent, it naturally happens
836 also that several lovers find their way to the same girl in one night, especially when she is no longer a beginner, and she takes "pity" -- as the Pangwe themselves say mockingly -- on them all (1). With such nžila, especially the older ones, the

[802] [211] 1. Even to keep track of their number is too difficult a task for her memory; for that reason the Jaunde girls count the number of their friends on little sticks of raffia (see Zenker).

men also permit themselves the use of offensive expressions and crude jokes, such as would be unheard of and strictly prohibited with a young girl -- especially the future wife. As an example,
[831] phalli are sometimes made of wood and then displayed wrapped in a leaf.

As has already been indicated, liaisons of the heart based on
831 genuine love are by no means uncommon. Nobody, on the other hand, will be surprised to learn that for the most part they are of limited duration and are incapable of bearing the burden which we expect of them. Thus I did not learn of a single case of a person
[762] committing suicide because of unrequited love or a spurned courtship, even though women hang themselves because somebody stole a few of their miserable hens, and men shoot themselves because their father sold a daughter in order to buy a wife, instead of leaving her to the son, the girl's brother. Generally speaking, the power of Negro love is not as great as that of the love of the Whites.

831 If the latter resembles a rushing stream which tears away everything in its path, the love of the Blacks is like a still, deep lake, and it is certain that even in Africa the magic power of love often intimately joins two hearts and that there is genuine love which in every respect is comparable to the European conception. This point is well demonstrated by the "love tests" which the men sometimes apply in order to convince themselves of the love of a future wife, quite according to the pattern: "Drum prüfe, wer sich ewig bindet, ob sich das Herz zum Herzen findet" /Trans., "Therefore assay, before you bind yourself never to part, whether there's harmony 'twixt heart and heart," from Schiller, "Das Lied von der Glocke"/.

539 514 836 An example is presented by the following tale.

One day a young man went to see the girl that he loved and wanted to marry. At night, while he was sleeping in her house, he had /257/ to urinate, but since he did not know where the toilet was and since there was no man there whom he could ask, he said to himself: "Oh, what shall I do in my need? -- -- But let me see whether the girl really loves me!" He took a small cooking pot (obĕbē') and used it so that it was filled to the brim (lǫ̆'dŏtǭ); then he covered it with leaves and placed it behind a bed. The next morning he set out on the way home, and the girl accompanied him until they were outside the village. On the way he said: "I am going now to my village, and I shall see

ng(e) oa dzĭn ma: obĕbē', ng(e) oa bĕ'ne
if you love me: (the) little pot, if you hate (do not

ma: obĕbē',"
love) me: (the) little pot,

that is, the little pot will show whether you love me or not! The girl did not understand what he meant by this and asked him to explain. But he simply answered:

ŏ', kaa dzăm mfĕ,
Oh, no matter other (than that):

ng(e) oa dzĭ'n ma: obĕbē', ng(e) oa bĕne ma, obĕbē'.

539 514 836 When the girl went home she thought to herself: "I wonder what that means: ng(e) oa dzĭn ma: obĕbe, ng(e) oa bŭne ma: obĕbe!?" When she was in the house, she was still thinking about it; then she suddenly smelled the odor and found the little pot behind the bed. She took it, poured its contents into the plantain grove behind the house, and cleaned it thoroughly with water. Meanwhile her lover had secretly come back to the village and observed from a hiding place how the affair was developing, whether the girl would call other people and publicly expose him (1). But nothing /258/ of the kind happened. He then saw

539 514 836 558

1. In that case the lover would not have been able to hide from the mockery of his companions and would have become completely unacceptable in the village of his beloved. It should not be forgotten how terribly disgraceful a Negro finds such an occurrence, indeed, the very thought of a natural need to relieve himself. A person who has had, as we would say, an accident, as in the above case, will be socially unacceptable for a long time if the incident becomes known, while we "barbarians" with our trifling amount of oson look upon such an occurrence as a painful accident for the moment, but do not carry it any further and, moreover, regard the physiological evacuation of the body as something "natural." Unfortunate uncivilized civilized people! The savages are better people after all! They have a countless number of circumlocutions for the terrible deed: ma ke a npɔ̀ŋ̀ bĭăn, "I am going to fetch a medicine"; a bŏbe ekŭi di, "to inspect the spring trap"; a bŏbe ebĕi, "to inspect the pitfall"; a tšă ndžāă,

514 539

514 [757] 539

the feces or anus) as a deterrent medicine for thefts from the field and the significant tale of the turtle and the woman. A turtle wants to force a girl against her will to become his wife, and after all kinds of vain attempts finally succeeds only by smearing the girl's bed and clothes one night with his own feces. Having done so, he lies down to sleep, and the next morning when the girl sees the mess, he threatens to tell in the village and all the world that she had befouled her bed. The turtle thus put the girl completely in his power and forced her to agree to the marriage.

539 836 514 the girl going into her mother's house, quickly stole after her through the plantain grove, and listened behind the house to what the girl might say; not by a single word did she mention the incident. He then went back with a joyful heart, and said to himself: "This girl truly loves me." After two days he returned, asked for her hand in marriage, and took her back to his village as his wife.

This tale gave rise to the popular saying: ng(e) oa dzi̍n ma, obe̍be̍', ng(e) oa be̍ne ma: obe̍be̍'.

832 The great number of love medicines (bia n andu'man), which very graphically symbolize the fusion and embracing of the sexes (in a spiritual as well as a physical sense), has already been discussed in Volume II, page 30 .

848 836 Illegitimate children are quite rare. The child's father -- even when he is known -- has no claim upon the child, just as the girl has no claim upon the father. The child belongs to the girl's father and is regarded as a not altogether unwelcome addition, since when the girl marries, it considerably raises her purchase price. As long as the mother remains unmarried, her child stays in the house of her parents. When she marries, the child becomes /259/ a part of the marriage bargain, as it were, and is considered

836 entirely as the husband's own. If the mother runs away with a
848 man -- which sometimes happens -- without taking the child along, it is fed by the grandmother whose name it also usually bears if it is a girl. It is by no means a disgrace for the girl if her sexual relations with young men have consequences.

3. Marriage

835 We have already seen that sexual intercourse within blood
184 relationship is taboo (ekĭ). Such relationship includes:

1. one's own familial group;
2. the mother's familial group;
3. the familial group of the father's mother.

Formerly this taboo was observed by all Pangwe with uniform strictness, but today it is frequently circumvented. The Jaunde do not always observe it, and the Fang -- of all people, the Fang with their constantly emphasized oson -- have dropped it for the own familial group, but retain it for the other familial groups. To the Ntum and all the other Pangwe this shocking occurrence has been a great irritant, and they never let an opportunity pass of making fun of the immorality of the Fang who "cohabit with their own sisters" or of speaking indignantly about it, without failing at the same time to stress their own great respect for morality and decency. This is done despite the fact that the Ntum themselves have at least in part been corrupted by the bad example of the Fang, and in other respects, too, transgressions against the taboo are not infrequent. The custom of having sexual relations with women of one's own kin group (sisters in the Pangwe sense) is called zămadulu III or simply zăma III, the verb being a dulu zăma. As can be seen by the prefix class, the name has been derived entirely unchanged from the name for God (zăma) and signifies "to act like Sama," because, as can be seen from the creation story (Vol. II, p. 16 ff. /Ed., not translated/), Sama (Nsambe) had sexual intercourse with his own sister.

835 Where zămadulu is still taboo, a payment must be made to
684 the girl's father in case of a violation. The payment varies depending upon the gravity of the offense: a number of goats

835 (formerly it was commonly five goats), as well as a dog which
684 serves as scapegoat, that is, the dog is supposed to take upon itself the disease with which the sinner is threatened by the cult spirit. If disease nonetheless occurs, medicines which are connected with the cults are prepared (see medicines for cult sicknesses, Vol. II, p. 36).

855 The modern, freer conception or -- among the Fang -- the
582 denial of the taboo against intercourse with blood relatives (in the Pangwe sense) disappears as soon as there is a question of marriage. Then the taboo is in force everywhere and without qualifications. /260/

836 Free intercourse between the young man and the girl is, in
583 many cases, only a shorter or longer testing period which, if the result of the "test" -- in this case a physical one, as contrasted to the spiritual one of which we spoke above -- is favorable, leads to marriage. If the girl is very much in love with her friend, to use a Pangwe expression, he can readily persuade her to follow him immediately to his village. Such an "abduction" is considered -- partly, at least -- to be sanctified by custom, even if the bride's family is usually not overjoyed at the practice. In such a case, the girl's father will set out the next day to demand the purchase price from his son-in-law. If the latter is able to pay him a part, say, half of this price, the matter is settled, and the balance is usually put on a buy-now-pay-later basis. If it turns out, however, that the "abducter" is a poor beggar or that his father does not want to produce the money, the bride is mercilessly taken away from him again even if she pours out streams of tears. You simply cannot get something for nothing. In the majority of cases, however, the girl will not agree to run away with her lover; instead she will demand that her suitor ask her father for her hand in marriage and first make a payment.

583 Every woman, young or old, has the same value. Nonetheless, the amount of the purchase price fluctuates greatly in accordance with general economic conditions. A woman is cheapest among the Jaunde and she is most expensive in the heart of Pangwe country. The price fluctuates between 200 and 750 marks in our money. On the average, one can assume a price of

circumcision was public, and the woman to whom it was done underwent the gibes and insults of all the inhabitants.

The life of the young people is the same as that of the adults. The virginity of a woman is considered unimportant and the Fan have sexual relations from the time they are capable of cohabitation. When a young girl has a child, it belongs to her parents, from whom the child acquires wealth; there is no search for the father and the young girl keeps all the respect which she enjoyed. Young girls are free to give themselves to whomever they please. This very broad morality, however, has one important qualification in that there are, so to speak, no young girls, the little girls having been married off by their parents very early, sometimes even before their birth.

Marriage (alug). Men rarely marry before the age of twenty years, and usually later, because they do not have the means to pay the dowry for taking a wife.

Exogamy is always practiced because marriage between people of the same tribe is sterile. Marriage between cousins is forbidden up to the third generation and in general, marriage is forbidden between persons linked by any kind of kinship; in this case there is also prohibition of sexual relations. No penalty is prescribed for infraction, but the guilty ones will fall ill and their children, if they have any, will not live.

Occasionally there are instances when marriage between relatives is authorized, but only after the practitioner has removed the prohibition by the process [88] called abvule minsem. The practitioner goes to find some termite earth (ngurege), a plant (mekaga), and a vine (nyola dzik); the plant and vine are folded and placed in an etok (a container of banana leaves) full of water. The termite earth is placed on a nzum (see the description in the section on conception) and the etok is placed underneath. The two kinsmen who want to marry also stand underneath it, while the practitioner climbs onto the nzum, dips the leaves in the etok, and says, "nseme ose mi waga bo e wo ma va yüi" (I remove every prohibition that you have made). He hits the termite earth with the leaves and then takes the etok and pours the contents onto the heads of the two people from whom he is removing the prohibition. With the remainder, the man and woman each takes a washing.

A man who has not enough dowry but who finds a young girl eager to marry him may take her away in the night; when the parents come

581 554 562 specific social meaning: it creates bonds (abè) which fasten together the family and clan groupings. Curault points out that this imposes a "close union, in spite of divergencies in language and in spite of the palavers of the different parts of the Pahouin people." At the same time, marriage [120] has a personal meaning. In traditional [556] Fang society the possession of many wives is the principal sign of wealth and the condition for all increase of wealth. This wealth conditions the importance of the social role; it makes possible the acquisition of a kind of personal power in a society with hardly any hierarchical system. (1)

1. Let us point out that two words with the same root, éval and évala, mean "polygamy" and "a prop, a support," respectively.

836 Because of this personal element the competition for women can become particularly keen. Very early, government reports pointed out the frequency of palavers due to the "women question," and they continue to complain of them as being characteristic of "Fang society and psychology." Let us state at the outset that the competition does not concern the sexual services demanded from the woman. For the unmarried men there are various compensating possibilities -- but only in the line of "lustful sexuality," to quote the expression of R. Bastide. (2) The young unmarried people have

2. R. Bastide, Sociologie et Psychanalyse [Sociology and Psychoanalysis], Bibliothèque de Sociologie Contemporaine, Paris, 1950.

complete sexual liberty among themselves: it is the custom called azɔ̀ya-angɔ̀n (azɔ̀ya, fornication; ngɔ̀n, maiden). E. Trezenem states in his monograph on the Fang of the Ogooué that "virginity of the woman is considered of no importance," that "the young 834 girls are free to give themselves to whomever they want." Then 584 he adds an "important restriction," saying that there are practically

5: Balandier--60 E-5 (1946-1951) 1955 FH9 Fang FH9

836 no young girls, the little girls being married very early by their
584 parents, sometimes even before their birth." (3) This restriction

3. E. Trezenem, "Notes éthnographiques [Ethnographical Notes]," op. cit., p. 87.

is entirely relative, for, according to L. Mba, "the custom allows the betrothed to have as many lovers as she wants during the time of her engagement." M. Bertaut specifies similarly that "the young girl is free as far as her body is concerned so long as she has no husband," which may represent a long period of freedom, considering the time it takes to settle a bride price that is always very large. There exists also a kind of tolerated, if not established,
837 prostitution, since the husband may "place one of his wives under
[546] obligation to bring him some income by prostituting herself to strangers." (4) Certain customs, such as the placing of a wife at

4. L. Mba, op. cit., p. 29; and V. Largeau, Encyclopédie Pahouine [Pahuin Encyclopedia], article on adultery": ... "a husband is always free to lend his wife on condition of a certain payment... ."

the disposal of a guest, or the lending or [121] exchanging of a wife (1) as a token of friendship (the wife becoming munõgo ângôm,

1. Cf. V. Largeau, op. cit.:" ... the rules of good hospitality require the host to put one of his wives at the disposal of the one whom he is entertaining. On the other hand, it is a current custom for two good neighbors who respect each other to exchange wives from time to time, and this is a definite indication of mutual sympathy." Also, Captain Maignan,

584 uncle, a full brother or a half brother on the father's side. The custom persists in the better families, even if the future spouses' consent is asked or if the initiative for the union comes from them. When this is impossible, for instance among emigrants, it is still the correct thing for the prospective husband to use the offices of an older person, perhaps even an administrative superior, who arranges the marriage, [583] kômesan aluk. To the nsuba proper are added customary presents to the future mother-in-law and affinal family, which are the more important when payment of the nsuba is in periodic installments (as it more and more tends to be). After the first installment is paid, there [824] is a bethrothal, and the young girl, who before that has enjoyed sexual freedom, is from now on theoretically supposed to be faithful. Sexual relations with the prospective husband often begin at this time, if they have not already. The Christian ceremony and the civil registry take place when a portion of the bride price, amounting to from a quarter to a half, has been paid. In former times the bride used to remain in seclusion before going in procession from her village, where the groom's family came to fetch her, to her conjugal residence. After consummation of the marriage, she would with her mother's help cook the first meal served to her husband. These practices have fallen into general disuse.

Up to a recent date, on the other hand, the custom persisted—now prohibited officially—of "paying bride price" for a girl who had not reached puberty, even for a fetus or an unconceived child, who would go to live with her affinal family almost as soon as she was weaned, there to be brought up either by her mother-in-law or by her husband's first wife, whom she would look upon as her ntyi (mother-in-law). The marriage would be consummated after the girl's second menstruation (ayene ngon = to see the moon).

583 The mfañ aluk form of marriage is the most usual nowadays. It leads to many lawsuits in connection with deciding who is to be the [691] nya ndômô to collect the "bride price." As the ntôl môt's authority has weakened, especially when he is not the girl's real father /sic/, uncles and brothers quarrel over who is to receive the nsuba. Some emancipated young women, particularly those who are mistresses of Europeans, decide the matter by collecting it themselves, but this is very much frowned on.

[586] The "bride price" is given back to the husband in the case of divorce, to the fiancé in the case of a broken betrothal, caused, for example, by the premature death of the fiancée.

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

bread-winners and some are strong and muscular, while many more are weak and worn out from ceaseless toil.

The Fang make good carriers, and will do a splendid day's journey even in the wet season with bad forest trails, if not overloaded. A carrier's load should never exceed 25 kilogrammes; and 20 would pay better on a long journey. The first day out with a caravan the men usually drag along slowly, until their loads settle well down in the *kingi* and fit their backs. The *kingi* is a very ingenious contrivance for carrying a load in; it is usually made from a forest vine with a plaited head strap. To hurry carriers the first day is a bad mistake; poorly adjusted loads chafe and cause sore backs, and before night the whole caravan is tired out and sulky. It is a wise traveller in Africa as elsewhere who knows how to save his men.

A very noticeable fact among the Fang is the scarcity of old men. I attribute this largely to the ravages of syphilis; the same terrible disease that has done so much towards the degeneration of numerous coast tribes, and which is already playing fearful havoc among the Fang. Indolent, untrustworthy and warlike, they are nevertheless a most companionable people. The slightest piece of drollery or a joke immediately causes laughter. It has been my privilege to visit many foreign lands including China, Japan and Korea, yet never in my life have I met such an absolutely good-natured, fun-loving people as the Fang.

The men are not fond of work. They frequently ask me for something to do to "earn a cloth." If I tell them to cut fence poles or good clean bark in the forest, they decline. A male Fang's idea of work is to sit in the *Abeng* (= palaver house) and make fish lines by rolling pineapple fibre along the upper portion of his thigh, or to manufacture *Abi* (roof thatch). At these occupations he can converse with all comers, hear the news and take his part in talking a palaver. They are a revengeful people and will keep up a palaver over a woman for many years. If they do not succeed in shooting a man during a palaver they do not hesitate to fire at and kill a woman, while captives held as hostages are often treated with great cruelty.

The women regard virtue very lightly. Before marriage a girl can do nearly as she pleases. It is absolutely safe to state that it would be almost impossible to find a maiden in a Fang village over sixteen years of age. Adultery is common, and one of the chief causes of "women palavers." Women rank first in value as goods for trade, next in value are goats, then guns and cloth. The greed for goods has a strong hold on the people. They learn quickly but have very little originality. They have no obscene rites. Their habits are very dirty; they will wash in a small pool of water and, while bathing, fill the gourds or imported jugs with the water in which they are washing and use it for domestic purposes. In many other ways they are absolutely filthy, and descend to the level of brute creation. They are not over-burdened with modesty, both sexes frequently bathe together in a perfectly nude condition. A male Fang passes a large percentage of his time in

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

now responsible and liable to two parties; if he is reasonable they all meet and talk the palaver. If the palaver is serious, each party appoints his *ntol* (ambassador). The palaver is usually talked in the main street of the town, before all the representatives of the interested clans, and before all strangers in town. The Fang are born orators, and remarkable gestures and orations are made while talking the palaver. The speaker usually walks backwards and forwards grasping and leaning upon a "palaver stick." He commences with: *M'zona* (I say thus); when speaking for another he says *A'zona* (he says thus); when speaking for the people of his town, *Ba zona* (they say thus). Sometimes the *ntöls* (ambassadors) sit in a canoe in the middle of a river or a stream, and talk the palaver, the injured parties being on either side of the stream. The case is talked, the goods demanded in payment stated, and an effort made to *kik nsang* (cut or end the palaver). If they succeed, then the palaver is *cut* (ended), and a dance follows; if no agreement is come to, the meeting breaks up and a tribal war exists between these clans.

628 681 [537]

Salutations.

There are three salutations common to all. Two friends meet, they each grasp the arm of the other, high up on the biceps; a slight pause is made, then the hand is slipped down to clasp the wrist. This is also the customary salutation used by the Bulu.

576

Two friends meeting salute by embracing.

A traveller entering the *abeng* (palaver house) walks over to the headman and sits on his knee a moment, at the same time placing one arm around the headman's neck.

Hospitality demands that all strangers be served food by the town women to strangers in the *abeng*.

[574]

Wives are loaned to guests. [837]

Coarse conversation is indulged in by old and young of both sexes. [521]

Considerable license prevails among the unmarried; less so among the married. [836]

VIII.—*Invention, Natural Forms, Conservatism.*

Invention.—The arts in use are common to all the different clans of the great Fang tribe. Any new discovery as the working of iron is credited to the dwarfs or *nqui*. The natives are always ready to admit that the *nqui* are very clever; they have a saying "no person knows like a *mon nqui* (dwarf) what is inside the forest." When obtainable the natives use an imported saw, or file, and admit its superiority over their own crude tools. A Fang may be impressed at the knowledge and power of the white man, but is not greatly surprised; the reason for this is that many white men are credited with possessing supernatural powers.

176 563 609

Some of the clubs, tools and weapons approximate to the natural forms of the branches or roots of trees. Axe handles and the handle of a certain kind of adze have

412